

What is claimed is:

1. A method of treating viral encephalitis in a patient, comprising administering to the patient an effect amount of an agent that inhibits binding of leukocytes to brain endothelial cells via leukocyte surface antigen alpha-4 integrin.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the agent is administered to the patient after viral infection.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the patient is asymptomatic.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the patient shows symptoms of encephalitis.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the agent is administered prophylactically to a patient at risk of infection by a virus causing encephalitis.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the virus is a herpes virus or an arbovirus.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising monitoring the patient for symptoms of encephalitis.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the agent specifically binds to the alpha-4 as a subunit of VLA-4.

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1 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the agent is an
2 antibody.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein the antibody is
2 a Fab fragment.

1 11. The method of claim 8, wherein the agent binds
2 to an epitope of the alpha-4 subunit formed by association
3 with a beta-1 subunit in an alpha-4 beta-1 complex and lacking
4 in an alpha-4 beta-7 complex.

1 12. The method of claim 9, wherein the antibody is
2 a humanized antibody.

1 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the humanized
2 antibody is a humanized form of the mouse 21.6 antibody
3 characterized by a light chain variable domain designated SEQ.
4 ID. No. 1 and a heavy chain variable domain designated SEQ.
5 ID. No. 2.

1 14. The method of claim 1, further comprising
2 administering an antiviral agent to the patient.

1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising
2 administering an antiinflammatory agent to the patient.

1 16. The method of claim 1, wherein the agent is
2 formulated with a carrier as a pharmaceutical composition.

1 17. The method of claim 1, wherein the patient is a
2 pediatric patient.

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